

Shaheen amendment to H.R. 3548, which is the unemployment benefits extension bill.

I very much regret that the majority leader has had to file a cloture motion on a motion to proceed to even consider that issue. To my mind, this should not be a partisan issue. There ought to be agreement in this body that we should proceed to extend unemployment benefits given the circumstances we face.

The job market in my home State of New Mexico is dismal, and there is very little indication of improvement expected in the near future. New Mexico's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate is modest compared to some States. It was only 7.5 percent in August of 2009, but that is up from 7 percent in July and up from 4.3 percent a year ago. The trend is definitely disturbing. The decline in the number of jobs is the worst the State has seen in more than 45 years—with the speed with which we have been losing jobs.

The pain of unemployment is being felt across the country. More than 5 million Americans have been unemployed for 6 months or more, and 2 million of these workers face the end of their unemployment benefits before the end of this year. There are up to 4,000 New Mexicans who will exhaust their unemployment benefits by December 2009. The total number of unemployed and underemployed—including those who are working two or three part-time jobs to try to make ends meet and those who have given up looking for work—approaches 17 percent of our workforce. These are not just numbers, obviously. These are real people who face each day with the dread of not knowing how they are going to pay for the groceries they need that week or their mortgage payment or their rent payment.

The stimulus funding Congress passed earlier this year has helped to slow job losses, and it has created some new jobs, especially in education and in government services more generally. New Mexico's stimulus funding, alone, is expected to create about 22,000 jobs this year. This has had a significantly positive impact on the State's unemployment picture, but it is still not enough to fully address the needs created by the economic situation in which we find ourselves. Nationwide, for every job opening, there are six applicants. I was struck by the article on the front page of the New York Times this morning entitled "\$13 an Hour? 500 Sign Up, 1 Wins a Job." This was dated-lined Burns Harbor, IN. It says:

As soon as the job opening was posted, on the afternoon of Friday, July 10, the deluge began.

C.R. England, a nationwide trucking company, needed an administrative assistant for its bustling driver training school here [in Indiana]. Responsibilities included data entry, assembling paperwork and making copies.

It goes on to quote the head of corporate recruiting. It says:

When Stacey Ross, C.R. England's head of corporate recruiting, arrived at her desk at

the company's Salt Lake City headquarters the next Monday, she found about 300 applications in the company's e-mail inbox. And the fax machine had spit out an inch-and-a-half thick stack of resumes before running out of paper.

The article goes on to point out the estimate is there were 500 applications filed for this 1 job, a \$13-an-hour job, but they took down the posting of the availability of the job.

We have a very serious problem that needs addressing. The extension of unemployment benefits will not ease the worry of the unemployed. It will not eliminate the dread they have about the need to pay bills each month. But it will make things a little bit easier for some of those individuals. Extension will make it easier, not just for the direct recipients but for the larger economy as well. Economists tell us that for every \$1 in unemployment benefits the government provides, \$2.15 is generated throughout the economy. These economic benefits are felt most immediately, as benefit recipients use the funds almost immediately to meet their daily needs.

The legislation the majority leader has filed, the petition to proceed to it, takes a responsible approach to providing these additional funds. The extension is paid for with an 18-month extension of the Federal unemployment tax, which has traditionally been used, both by Republicans and by Democratic administrations, for this very purpose. The extension is a responsible, well-thought-out response to the dire circumstances many Americans find themselves in today.

As I said at the beginning, this should not be a partisan issue. Unemployment is affecting everyone, regardless of their political party or their ideology. I urge the Senate to set aside partisan politics and to agree to the majority leader's request that we proceed to this bill so we can quickly provide assistance to the thousands of Americans who depend upon these benefits as they continue to search for jobs.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, what is now the floor situation?

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2010—CONFERENCE REPORT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will re-

sume consideration of the conference report to accompany H.R. 2647, which the clerk will report.

The assistant bill clerk read as follows:

Conference report to accompany H.R. 2647, a bill to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2010 for military activities of the Department of Defense, to prescribe military personnel strengths for fiscal year 2010, and for other purposes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will be 1 hour for debate, equally divided and controlled between the Senator from Michigan, Mr. LEVIN, and the Senator from Arizona, Mr. MCCAIN.

The Senator from Michigan is recognized.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, I yield myself 20 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is recognized.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, the conference report on H.R. 2647, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010, would fully fund the fiscal year 2010 budget request of \$680 billion for national security activities in the Department of Defense and the Department of Energy. This bill is the product of months of hard work by our committee, culminating in more than 6 weeks of negotiations with our House counterparts. I thank all of the members of the Senate Armed Services Committee for the commitment they have shown to the best interests of our men and women of our Armed Forces. I want to particularly thank Senator MCCAIN, our ranking minority member, for his great work throughout the conference. It has been a real pleasure to work side-by-side with Senator MCCAIN as we worked through issues with our counterparts from the House of Representatives.

I also want to thank the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, IKE SKELTON, and his ranking minority member, BUCK McKEON, for the cooperative spirit with which they worked with us throughout the conference.

This conference report contains many important provisions that will improve the quality of life of our men and women in uniform, provide needed support and assistance to our troops on the battlefield in Iraq and Afghanistan, make the investments we need to meet the challenges of the 21st century, and require needed reforms in the management of the Department of Defense.

First and foremost, the bill before us continues the increases in compensation and quality of life that our service men and women and their families deserve as they face the hardships imposed by continuing military operations around the world. For example, the bill contains provisions that would authorize a 3.4 percent across-the-board pay raise for all uniformed military personnel—a half a percent more than the budget request and the annual rate of inflation; increase the Army's active-duty end strength by nearly 30,000, and authorize an additional